Kent & Essex IFCA

Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Annual Plan 2026-2027

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Introduction

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (KEIFCA), and the District for which it has responsibility, was established under sections 149 and 150 of Marine and Coastal Access Act in 2011. This annual plan outlines the key actions and workstreams for KEIFCA in 2024/5; how it will continue to shape inshore management and contribute towards the Government's Marine Policy Statement.

THE IFCA VISION: ***"Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities will lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries, by successfully securing the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry"***

- Achieving a sustainable marine economy
- Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
- Using sound science responsibly
- Living within environmental limits
- Promoting good governance

The Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority has clearly defined duties under the Act (sections 153 and 154) to manage sustainable fisheries and conserve the wider marine environment within the coastal waters off Kent and Essex.

153) Kent and Essex IFCA must manage the exploitation of sea fisheries resources in its district, in doing so it must:

a) seek to ensure that the exploitation of sea fisheries resources is carried out in a sustainable way.
b) seek to balance the social and economic benefits of exploiting the sea fisheries resources of the district with the need to protect the marine environment from, or promote its recovery from, the effects of such exploitation.
c) take any other steps which in the Authority's opinion are necessary or expedient for the purpose of making a contribution to the achievement of sustainable development.
d) seek to balance the different needs of persons engaged in the exploitation of sea fisheries resources in the district.

154) Kent and Essex IFCA must also seek to ensure that the conservation objectives of any MCZ in the district are furthered.

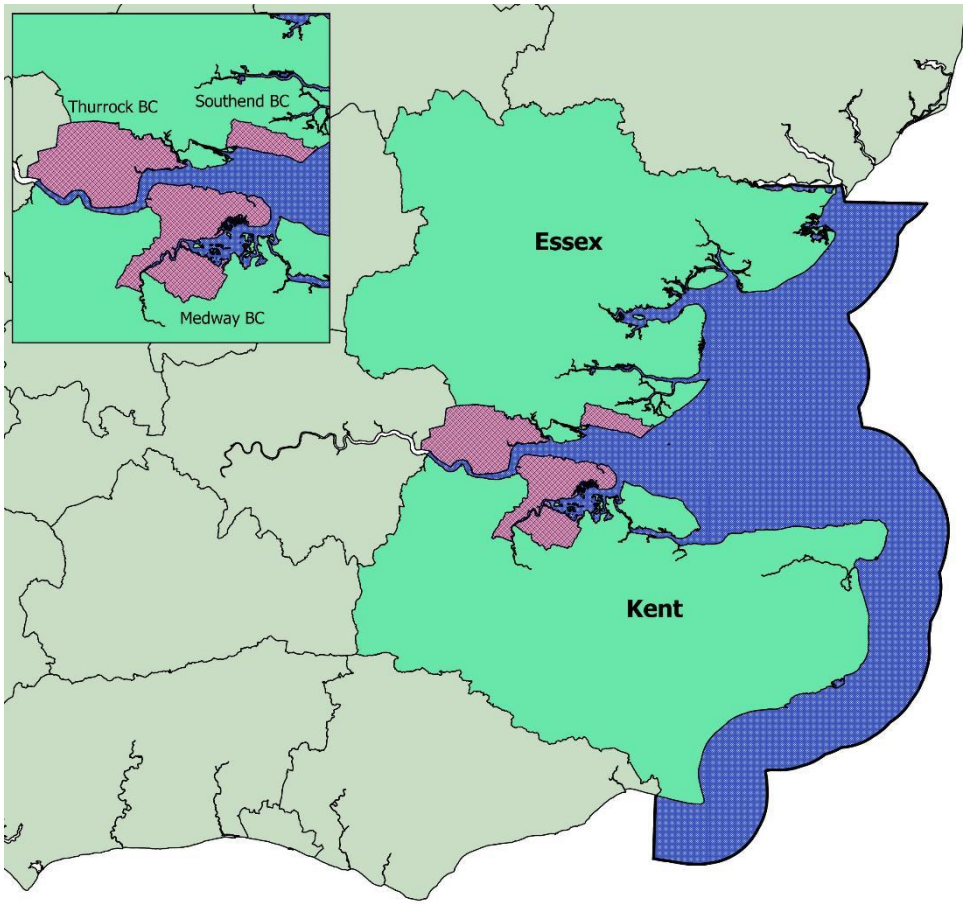
The Fisheries Act 2020 provides the framework to manage our fisheries as an independent coastal state and under the Act Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) are being created to replace the EU Common Fisheries Policy. The ambition is that FMPs will set out the polices to inform future management actions, creating national a fisheries management framework that IFCAs will work within. As a Competent and Relevant Authority' the Kent and Essex IFCA is also required to perform its duties regarding current and future iterations of the Habitats Directive, the Water Framework Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

The workstreams and aims set out in this plan are undertaken with due regard given to the Environmental Principles Policy Statement which was released at the end of 2023. The environmental principles listed in the policy statement operate as a set of overarching principles to guide the development of all relevant policy, which includes byelaws and management by KEIFCA.

The Kent and Essex IFCA District

The Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Order 2010, section 3, defines the extent of both the landward and seaward elements of the Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation District as summarised.

- the combined areas of the relevant councils (the "basic area" of the district); and
- the sea adjacent to the basic area of the district within the boundaries specified to a distance of 6 nautical miles from the 1983 baselines.



Seaward district boundaries

Kent & Essex IFCA district covers an area of over 3,412 km^2 and extends from the east end of Rye Bay in Kent to the northern boundary of Essex on the River Stour. The seaward boundary follows the 6-mile nautical limit measured from the 1983 baseline, which, due to drying sand banks, extends up to 15 miles offshore at its furthest point.

Upstream district boundaries

The up-river KEIFCA boundary in the Thames includes the waters adjacent to Kent County Council and Thurrock Council, with the district boundary running from Dartford Creek (River Darent) on the south shore to Mar Dyke on the North Shore.

The other district limits for the rest of the rivers located within the boundaries of Kent and Essex are to their tidal limit (including, the Medway, the Blackwater and the Colne).

Focus and Priorities for KEIFCA 2026-2027

Introduction

The annual plan tries to outline some of the key tasks KEIFCA intends to address over the year, balancing a wide range of competing priorities within the KEIFCA annual budget with the resources available to us. As in previous years there is a wide range of actions and issues that vie for both our time and resource, and it is always challenging to choose between projects or workstreams that are equally important but to different stakeholders or are important regionally but less so nationally and vice versa. Our work covers both fisheries management and marine conservation and balancing the demands and integrating these two workstreams, that are sometimes pulling in very different directions, is always an ongoing challenge.

After several years of focusing on developing MPA management measures and reviewing and implementing the Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery Order 2024 we are now in the position where the legislation is in place, and we are moving into the next phase of working within this new framework. At the same time the FMP programme is starting to take shape, and decisions and fisheries management measures are starting to flow from this process. These changes allow KEIFCA to start to look further forward and to think more strategically as to how to best deliver our duties in this new landscape.

Fisheries Management Plans

With the publication of the 'Cockle FMP', the 'Skates and Rays FMP' and the 'Southern North Sea non-quota demersal species FMP' in December 2025, the FMP framework is taking shape and now covers all the major fisheries in the KEIFCA district. Whilst it will take time to start to implement these new FMPs, we are now in a very different place to a few years ago as there is now a national plan, with objectives and actions, for each of the key commercial species caught by our local fishing fleet.

Whilst the national FMP implementing processes are still evolving and it is still unclear as to the long-term FMP programme budgets and spending arrangements, it is important that KEIFCA, working with other IFCAs, remain flexible as to how to help deliver FMP actions and contribute to individual FMP working groups. Although KEIFCA has received an annual FMP contribution of £50,000 since 2021, confirmation of these funds usually comes at least halfway through the financial year making planning and committing to specific projects difficult.

Whist there is a commitment to ensure that local views and requirements are represented and fed into the actions that flow from all the FMPs, it is suggested that priority should be given to the 'Bass FMP', the 'Whelk FMP' and the 'Cockle FMP'. These three FMPs cover three

significant species within the KEIFCA district, and any changes flowing from the FMP process could have a very significant impact on our local stakeholders. Under this approach, both the Authority and its officers would look to take a more proactive approach in helping to deliver key FMP actions arising from these FMPs as well as take an active role in supporting working groups (KEIFCA is already the IFCA lead for the 'Whelk FMP').

For the 'Crab and Lobster FMP', the 'King Scallop FMP', the 'Southern North Sea Skates and Rays FMP', and the 'Channel & Southern North Sea demersal non-quota species FMP', KEIFCA and KEIFCA officers would generally look to adopt the role of assisting rather than of a leading, feeding into outputs like consultations or reports. Within this group of FMPs there might be specific actions or workstreams where KEIFCA might want to take more of a lead role (e.g. to develop future sustainable cuttlefish and squid fisheries in the KEIFCA district in the demersal non-quota FMPs). For the 'Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel mixed flat fish FMP' and the 'North Sea and Channel sprat FMP', KEIFCA would generally look to monitor progress, however KEIFCA will continue to push for information and actions regarding the reduction in Dover Sole being caught in the Thames.

With so many detailed things being progressed communication is vital, and whilst DEFRA have set up a specific FMP blog, there could be value in working with the AIFCA to create specific webpages that outline the current IFCA management measures around the coast and provide a more detailed update and record of the key FMPs actions impacting the inshore fleet. At the regional level KEIFCA will continue to disseminate key information, such as consultations and reports, or promote new legislation to local stakeholders and when required present the information at quarterly Authority meetings for feedback and views.

Management of KEIFCA cockle fisheries

With the establishment of the new Thames Estuary Cockle Regulating Order 2024 and the issuing of the first round of 7-year TECFO licences, attention can start to focus on the running of the new Order and setting up the processes to help the next 7-year licencing process run smoothly. As one of the major changes in the new Order has been the increase in the number of licences, it is sensible to start workstreams that collect evidence as to the impact of this additional licence from both an environmental and a socio-economic perspective. Officers would like to work with partners and the cockle industry to develop projects or systems that would help provide evidence to answer this question and aid decision making for the next 7-year cycle.

Although the management plan that accompanies TECFO 2024 does outline the Licence Allocation Process, members of the industry have contacted officers to help them understand and better prepare for the next licencing round that will take place in 6 years' time. In an effort to help the industry, officers will look at producing a summary document that outlines the key sections and questions in the application process. Once the document is produced, officers would look to engage with the industry to help make future applicants aware of the new system and the application scoring criteria.

Over the last few years cockle management has focused a lot on the management within the new TECFO area. With the changing of the TECFO boundaries, the high value Margate Sands cockle stocks are now outside the TECFO area and managed under our flexible cockle permit byelaw. Although this byelaw does provide a mechanism to manage and run the cockle fisheries outside TECFO, the byelaw is structured to manage a large-scale fishery taking 11 tonnes of cockles a trip rather than the small-scale fishery (3 tonne a trip) that the Authority has agreed would run outside TECFO. Reviewing and modifying this byelaw could provide more tailored fishing opportunities to smaller-scale fishers. The ambition would be to start this process in early 2027 after running the 2026 permit fishery. However, as fishers are still getting accustomed to the new legislation and fishing arrangements, KEIFCA recognise that it might take a few fishing seasons for the optimum set-up to emerge and we would need to take this into account when considering the timelines and speed of development of a revised byelaw.

Manila clam trials

Developing new sustainable fisheries is vital for the future survival of our local fleet. The potential of a future Manila clam fishery is significant and is a key project we want to run this year. After agreeing an extended 2-year trial, building on the successful 2024 gear trial, KEIFCA started a 'fishery level trial' in early November 2025 with the plan to run the trial for 6 weeks. Unfortunately, due to the significant drop in the value of the clams all parties agreed to pause the trial after the first 10 days and restart it again in early spring 2026 when it is hoped that the price would be higher as a result of other UK clam fisheries being closed at that time of year.

Although the trial only ran for 10 days, we gathered enough evidence to test the REM vessel and gear monitoring units. Initial results suggest the REM units worked very well and can be used in future trials to accurately assess the footprint of clam harvesting gear needed to inform MPA habitat assessments. If all goes well, we are hoping to start the trial in mid-March and run it until the end of April/ beginning of May 2025. Running alongside the fishery trial our science team have been undertaking pre- and post-trial surveys of the clam beds and there is an ambition to produce a report that pulls together our current understanding of how the clam population in the Thames has changed and is changing. Based on the results and feedback of the trial we would look to run the second year of the trial in spring 2027.

Marine Protected Areas – Next Steps

As the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear (Prohibited Areas) Byelaw 2024 enters the final DEFRA review stage, KEIFCA can now turn its main focus from developing management measures to MPA data collection, improving our understanding of fishing impacts on MPA features and raising public awareness of MPAs.

Building on previous surveys, undertaking a native oyster survey on the BCRC MCZ site would be a key priority and help provide up-to-date information as to the current levels of native oyster stocks in this MPA. The data gathered from this survey would then feed into a review of the management of native oysters on the BCRC MCZ site as outlined in the byelaw.

Building on the introduction of Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) in the Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery Order (TECFO) fleet we can now look at ways to integrate these new systems into our fisheries and MPA management. Over the coming year we want to work with the local industry to explore how we could provide more detailed and accurate assessments of fishing activity and help make better informed and real-time management decisions, taking into consideration the requirements of the MPAs. This project has huge potential to change not only how this fishery is run but also similar fisheries both nationally and internationally.

There are a range of different MPAs in our district protecting a wide array of habitats, from seagrass beds to chalk reef, from native oyster stocks to sandbank systems. Unfortunately, apart from natural history documentaries, most people have little experience or knowledge of these important, and in some case internationally important habitats. We would like to work with partners on projects to educate people as to the importance of these habitats and how fisheries management measures currently work. Over the year we would like to explore opportunities to address this need and ideally would like to work with partner organisations with experience in engagement and utilise their platforms and networks to engage on this issue.

As in previous years, there are a range of ongoing MPA tasks like undertaking Habitat Regulations Assessments (HRAs), feeding into MMO lead offshore MPA management and working to understand and adapt to changing sea temperatures. Working with Essex University and Fishmongers Hall, KEIFCA have co-funded a PhD study that aims to investigate the water temperature tolerance and climate-related responses of key shellfish species in the Thames Estuary, providing evidence to support future sustainable fisheries management.

Enforcement of MPA management measures

KEIFCA will continue to enforce management measures that protect sensitive features within Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). As with all enforcement, the ultimate objective is compliance, and this is achieved by combining intelligence led risk-based enforcement with deterrent and disruption achieved by maintaining a visible presence within the MPAs. Rigid Inflatable Boats (RIBs) are the primary

enforcement vessels for this workstream and are ideally suited for the creeks and rivers covered by the Essex Estuaries bottom trawling byelaw.

Offshore areas will primarily be monitored by the larger patrol vessels, both during routine patrols and whilst traversing MPAs during surveys. The shore officers will also play a significant role in enforcing the byelaws by monitoring activity in ports and on the coast and by speaking to the general public to obtain information on activities which may potentially be in breach of the byelaws.

Reviewing inherited byelaws

When KEIFCA was created in 2011 the district expanded compared to the previous Kent and Essex Sea Fisheries Committee, with the new district incorporating areas which had previously been part of Sussex Sea Fisheries Committee, Eastern Joint Sea Fisheries Committee and the Environment Agency. Although the boundaries changed, the underpinning legislation did not, which meant that KEIFCA inherited a whole suite of byelaws that had been made by the previous administrations for each new area that was incorporated into our district. As KEIFCA has made new byelaws, we have steadily looked to replace or revoke these byelaws. As we are now in a position where the new FMP framework gives a clear policy direction, it would seem timely to again review and rationalise our inherited legislation. This process would reduce the legislative burden on industry and help simplify our fisheries management.

Marine Operations

Building on the work undertaken last year, officers will continue to work through and implement the requirements of Workboat Code 3. Over the past year significant steps have been taken to update and integrate our vessel management systems with the introduction of the digital vessel management platform Seaflux. This new system has replaced our manual processes and integrates vessel operations into a single online platform that can be easily accessed remotely on mobile phones. The new system centralises KEIFCA's safety management (including incident/event reporting and risk registers) and can be set up with automated alerts for expiring safety equipment and certifications. Although time has already been allocated to set-up and input the necessary information into this system, there is significant scope to develop this system further over the coming year to help us centralise other areas of safety management and work more efficiently.

The requirements of Workboat Code 3 have also required modifications on Nerissa and Tamesis and have been applied to the build of Nemo. As with last year, this has been and will continue to be a significant workstream over the year and work is due to start on Tamesis once Nerissa's Workboat Code 3 requirements have been completed and signed off.

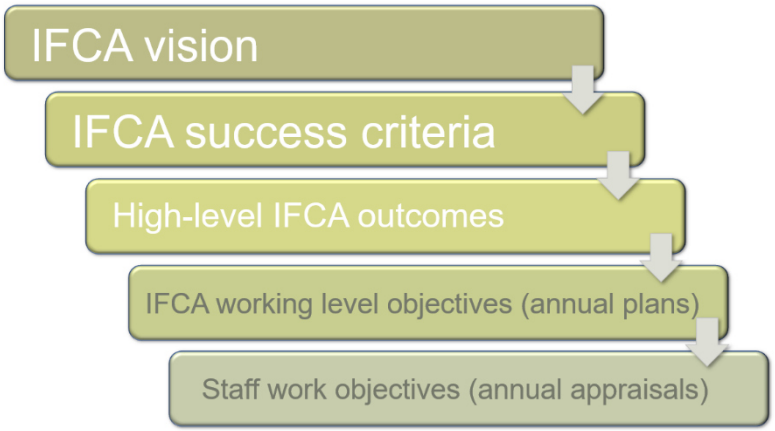
Changes to Local Government in Essex

The Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is underway in several English regions and following the outcomes of a consultation process it is probable that there will be changes to the current structure of local government in Essex. It is very likely that there will be a move away from the current two-tier system (county/ district councils) to a number of single unitary authorities (potentially 3-5). These changes will directly impact three of our current funding authorities Essex County Council, Southend on Sea Borough Council and Thurrock Council.

The current timetable suggests that after a decision on the new Local Authority structure in March 2026, new Unitary Authority elections are planned for May 2027 followed by a shadow period (May 2027 - March 2028), with the new Unitary Authorities going live on the 1 April 2028. A number of other IFCAs are in the same position and initial discussions have been held via the Association of IFCAs with DEFRA as to how to manage these changes and identify any actions that need to be taken. Since the creation of IFCAs in 2011 there have been several reorganisations or mergers of local government Authorities in other IFCA districts which means this is not a new process and there is a pathway to follow. Ensuring a smooth transition will be critical for the IFCA and officers will work closely with councillors to ensure that the legal duties and the role of KEIFCA is clearly understood by any new funding Local Authorities.

Delivery of Priorities

The vision for IFCAs encapsulates the core role of the organisations and the success criteria outline what is expected of IFCAs in achieving the vision. Five success criteria have been developed by all ten IFCAs through the Association of IFCAs. It is incumbent on KEIFCA to plan and report against these success criteria in a manner which it sees fit, and it is the priorities which this guidance identifies that we have used as priorities in our annual plan.



In order to meet the outcomes of the success criteria, DEFRA's guidance recommends that working level objectives that should form the basis of each IFCA's annual plan and that the objectives should inform the work of individual IFCA staff; making monitoring staff performance much easier and outlining how each staff member can clearly see how they are contributing to the overall success of IFCAs.

The five tables that follow, one for each success criteria, provide a detailed description of the work plan for the year from April 2026. Also included under the relevant success criteria are the Annual Communications Plan, the Annual Enforcement Plan/Risk Register, and the Annual Science & Research Plan. A glossary is included at the end of this document.

CIFCO - Chief IFCO	**PCEO -** Principal Compliance and Enforcement Officer	**Snr IFCO (S)** K **-** Senior IFCO Skipper (Kent)	**S IFCO (S)** E Senior IFCO (Skipper) Essex
DCIFCO - Deputy Chief IFCO	**PSCO -** Principal Scientific & Conservation Officer	**IFCO (CE)*** - IFCO (Compliance and Enforcement) **Licence & marine planning*	**IFCO (CO)** - IFCO (Cockle Officer)
OM - Office Manager	**IFCO (SC) -** IFCO (Science and Conservation)	**IFCO (CE)** - IFCO (Compliance and Enforcement)	
AO – Administration Officer	**PVOO** K **-** Principal Vessel Operations Officer (Kent)	**PVOO** E **-** Principal Vessel Operations Officer (Essex)	

The workstreams shown in the table below are categorised into two types of activities. The first, ongoing workstreams, are those which have already been existence and the second, new projects, are new workstreams.

Success Criterion 1: Communications and Engagement - *IFCAs are recognised and heard, balancing the economic needs of the fishery whilst working in partnership and engaging with stakeholders*

IFCAs will be visible, respected and trusted regulators within coastal communities and will maintain and deliver a strategy to communicate their vision and duties effectively. IFCAs will engage with policy makers, industry, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), recreational and commercial users; and other regulators. They will work jointly and collaboratively with partner organisations across boundaries; will participate and contribute to the development and implementation of regional and national marine policy, including the marine planning regime; will take long-term strategic decisions and manage risks effectively. IFCAs may maintain a national body to co-ordinate the activities of authorities that are party to arrangements.

Outcomes

1. The IFCA will maintain and implement an effective communication strategy.

2. The IFCA will maintain its website, ensuring public access to current fisheries and conservation information for the district, including management requirements and byelaws. Non-reserved IFCA Committee papers will be published.

3. The IFCA will contribute to co-ordinated activity at a national level.

4. The IFCA and its principal partners will have a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities. Memoranda of Understanding with MMO, Natural England, Environment Agency and Cefas will be maintained. Opportunities for greater efficiencies, effective joint working and collaboration will be explored and implemented when feasible.

Indicators

SC1A The IFCA will maintain a database of stakeholder contacts that will have been reviewed and updated by 31 March each year.

SC1B The IFCA will have completed a review of its communication strategy and implementation plan by 31 March each year.

SC1C The IFCA will have reviewed its website by the last working day of each month.

SC1D The IFCA will have reviewed its website and ensured it meets the objectives of its communication strategy, by 31 March each year.

SC1E The IFCA will have reviewed all of its Memoranda of Understanding by 31 March each year. There will be a clear plan in place to update MoUs where necessary, to an agreed timescale.

SC1F By 31 March each year, the IFCA will have participated appropriately, proportionately and at the right level of delegation, in regional and national fisheries and conservation activity identified in the annual plan.

Actions	Outputs	Member of staff responsible for outputs
ONGOING ACTION: 1A) Support the Association of IFCAs	• Annually contribute to the funding and running of the AIFCAs • Attend AIFCA meetings and take forward action points from meetings • Feed into AIFCA annual plan and report	**CIFCO** OM
ONGOING ACTION: 1B) Support national IFCA working groups	• Attend and contribute to the Chief Officers Group (COG), the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and the National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group (NIMEG)	**CIFCO** **DCIFCO**
ONGOING ACTION: 1C) Attend and contribute to external meetings	• Attend meetings with national partners (MMO, NE, CEFAS, EA, other IFCAs). • Help to inform and develop national policy and information flow between organisations. • Minutes of meetings.	**CIFCO** DCIFCO
ONGOING ACTION: 1D) Reply to Consultations/ Correspondence	• Replies to national partners e.g. policy consultation on legislation and information • Input into national databases • Responses and engagement with national policy consultations	**PSCO** IFCO (CE)* IFCO (SC)
ONGOING ACTION: 1E) Produce a quarterly e-bulletin and maintain stakeholder database	• Maintain an up-to-date list of addressed and email addresses of stakeholders, updated every 12 months • Design and distribute quarterly e-bulletin	**OM** AO
1F) Rasing industry awareness of the new Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery Order 2024 licence application process	• Produce a summary document that outlines the key actions and questions in the application process. • Officers would look to engage with the cockle industry to help make future applicants are aware of the new system and the application scoring criteria.	**CIFCO** DCIFCO OM/ AO
1G) Communicate the outcomes of the Manila Clam trials	• Work closely with trialists, so that they clearly understand the detail of the trial and what is expected of them • Coordinate with partner organisations like Natural England to share evidence and outcomes of the trials. • Present findings in documents, in Authority meeting papersm and at Authority meetings	**IFCO (SC)** PSCO CIFCO
1H) Develop a new the KEIFCA website	• Review the current KEIFCA website and identify what currently works and what can be improved. • Working with technical experts' design and build a new KEIFCA website • Transfer content from the old website to the new website	**DCIFCO** OM
1I) Provide support to the new AIFCA communications and engagement manager	• Answer information requests and support the AIFCA communications and engagement manager in national communications projects • Work with the AIFCA communications officer so that they understand the KEIFCA district, the needs of our local communities and the key issues in our IFCA.	**CIFCO** DCIFCO OM/ AO
1J) Produce an Annual Communication Plan	• Communication plan is produced each year and contained within the Annual Plan.	**CIFCO**

Annual Communications Plan

At a local level our aim is to create a community that is well informed about the marine environment and the work of the KEIFCA, and to engage them in helping make decisions about their local marine environment and resources. At the national level, our goal is to participate fully in promoting engagement with Fisheries Management Plans, creating a world class Marine Protected Area network and helping further the SE Marine plan.

With the introduction the AIFCA communications and Engagement Manager there now is a new focal point for national IFCA communications which will help provide IFCAs and their communities with a much more effective and coordinated national voice. Although the post is still new, the production of national documents like the IFCA Insights newsletter shows the immediate impact a role like this can have and we look forward to working closely with the AIFCA on new national projects as they start to take shape.

On the coast, the day-to-day work of KEIFCA staff, particularly the enforcement officers, represents one of the best forms of effective engagement with our stakeholders, and usually happens in an informal 'one-to-one' manner and involves KEIFCA officers fostering links, engendering trust and maintaining a presence in the district. KEIFCA members are also a vital conduit between the Authority and our local communities around our coast as well as with national networks and organisations. The KEIFCA website is a key component of our communication strategy and helps provide information about who we are, what we do, the current legislation as well as the development of new management measures. Overarching all these components, it is the promotion and running of the quarterly Authority meetings with easily accessible and promoted papers (e-bulletin), that helps communities engage with, and contribute to, effective decision making.

Nationally, the Association of IFCAs (AIFCA) and operational officer groups (COG, TAG and NIMEG) help IFCAs coordinate and promote key messages. At a regional level, KEIFCA officers sit on local groups such as the Essex Native Oyster Restoration Initiative (ENORI) and the North East Kent Marine Protected Area (NEKMPA) and support regional partnership projects like the Thames Estuary Partnership (TEP). Attendance and presenting at conferences and workshops, as well as working with bodies like the Shellfish Association of Great Britain (SAGB), also provide useful forums for KEIFCA to promote key messages.

In general, there are three main strands to our communication work and associated messaging;

a) General promotion of who we are and what we do
b) Promoting engagement in development of management measures that affect the exploited marine species or protected habitats in our district (e.g. byelaws, regulating orders, input into national legislation or policy, marine planning or licencing)
c) Education of stakeholders to achieve high compliance with legislation.

These different strands tend to engage different types of stakeholders, so where our general promotion engages more with the general public or interested marine user, the development of management measures or enforcement education needs to reach the people that are working and fishing in the district. In addition the effective methods of primary communication vary between these groups with general information being best communicated through websites, social media, print media, harbour days and short videos; detailed management engagement focusing on tailored local meetings and specific communications (emails, letters, consultation documents); and enforcement legislation targeted specifically at users by face-to-face contact, notice boards, stickers and handouts and tide tables, as well as being supported by our website. With these different stakeholder needs there is inevitable tension and resourcing conflicts between focusing on the production of general information about how we work and what we do, against the production of very specific and detailed information concerning legislation or byelaw technical measures.

Although KEIFCA has a relatively small annual communications budget and limited staff resource with officers also involved in our core enforcement and conservation work, our overview of activities below identifies and prioritises the key topics, actions and communication techniques we intend to focus on over the coming year.

Overview of key communication activities 2026/2027

Topic/ Issue	Key target group	Key Action/message	Website	Brief Officers	Brief members	KEIFCA meeting	National meetings	Local meetings	Community event	Poster	Sticker	Tide table	Media launch	e-bulletin	Newspaper	Information handout
Cockle fishery management	Fishing industry	• Support cockle industry in understanding the 7-year application process • Start the process of reviewing the KEIFCA flexible cockle permit byelaw.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓					✓		
Communicating outcomes of the Manila Clam trials	Fishing industry and interested local stakeholders	• Engage local communities in the outputs of the trial.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓						✓	✓	
MPA enforcement	Fishing industry and wider public	• Raise awareness of the closed areas management measures in MPAs	✓	✓							✓	✓				
Fisheries Management Plans	Fishing industry and recreational anglers	• Raise awareness of relevant FMPs and help facilitate local engagement when required.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓		

Success Criterion 2: Compliance and Enforcement - *IFCAs implement a fair, effective, and proportionate enforcement regime*

The IFCA enforcement regime is risk-based, makes appropriate use of intelligence, meets legislative standards and complies with the Regulators Code. It should make effective use of the resources available to regulators; complement and align, if possible, with the regimes in adjacent IFC Districts and management by other organisations including the MMO and Environment Agency. Consistency and fairness is important. Regulatory compliance is promoted. Enforcement action is carried out by trained, professional officers working to clear standards of conduct.

Outcomes

1. The IFCA will publish its enforcement risk register and strategy, clearly setting out its approach to achieving regulatory compliance and potential sanctions that may be applied for infringements and/or offences.

2. The IFCA will have developed consistency in regulations (byelaws) with other organisations

3. The IFCA will manage operational activity (e.g. through a Tasking & Co-ordination Group) and capture, record, evaluate and disseminate intelligence that is compatible with partner organisations. It is engaged in joint working with partner organisations.

4. Warranted Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officers (IFCOs) will be trained and accredited to nationally agreed standards. They will maintain professionalism and make appropriate interventions to deliver efficient, effective enforcement activity

Indicators

SC2A The IFCA will ensure its enforcement risk register and strategy are published and available on its website from 1 April each year

SC2B The IFCA will demonstrate in its Annual Report how it has worked with other regulators to achieve consistent quality, application and enforcement of management measures

SC2C The IFCA will compile records of enforcement activity in a standard format; provide them to the National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group (NIMEG) and publish them on its website.

SC2D The IFCA will adopt the national Code of Conduct for IFCOs, which will be reviewed annually and published on its website by 1 April.

SC2E The Code of Conduct for IFCOs is reflected in work objectives and annual appraisals for all Warranted Officers.

SC2F Warranted Officers attain accreditation. All undertake Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Actions	Outputs	Member of staff responsible for outputs
ONGOING ACTION: 2A) National updates and strategy	• Reviewing compliance and enforcement strategy, risk registers, data, information and enforcement processes to incorporate emerging issues and current best practice. • KEIFCA annual risk register is included with the Annual Plan • Attendance and involvement in the National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group (NIMEG) to generate consistency, improve processes and promote best practice. • Work with partners to develop and maintain national enforcement systems including Clue, Mobile Working and I-VMS. • Further FMP compliance goals via NIMEG: o Represent compliance and enforcement interests on Bass Management Group and Task and Finish Sub-groups. o Work to develop scientific bass gear trial proposal in East Area in line with FMP recommendations.	**PCEO** DCIFCO
ONGOING ACTION: 2B) Information and Planning	• Creation and implementation of strategic and operational plans for key enforcement issues and risks as listed in the schedule for enforcement. • Organisation and hosting of bi-weekly KEIFCA tasking and coordination (TCG) meetings. • Explore the introduction catch data, intel gaps, and RAG VOI to TCG process. • Use spatial data to assist with enforcement review and planning via GIS software. • Completion of annual enforcement plans and reports.	**PCEO** **DCIFCO**
ONGOING ACTION: 2C) Enforcement systems	• Gathering and analysis of intelligence, evidence, and other enforcement data to feed into KEIFCA databases and national systems • Ensure intelligence collection, process and requirements are understood by all officers. • "Clue" software - national IFCA and MMO intel and investigation management system: o engage with MMO development and support officer training to maximise effectiveness of the new system. o Prioritise rapid dissemination of information relating to officer safety. o Work with MMO to move TCG process onto Clue output. • Use the national standardised case file management system, with a view to moving onto Clue as case management database in line with national approach. • "Mobile Working App" new digital inspection recording system: o Continue work on trial MWA use and provide feedback. o Work with MMO and other IFCAs to develop Mobile Working App to be fit for purpose for IFCA inspections and move away from MCSS. • Working with partner organisations to enhance sharing of relevant external intelligence and improving effectiveness of information sharing via IR dissemination and TCG meetings. • Use internal SharePoint systems to record inspections, vessel information and cockle fishery data with Mobile Working App is still being developed. • Review, update and improve CRIB books to enhance officer knowledge and performance.	**PCEO** All IFCOs
ONGOING ACTION: 2D) Case Files and Prosecutions	• Building prosecution case files to fair and proportionate outcomes in line with KEIFCA policy, applying evidential and public interest tests via legal advice. • Enhance front line enforcement skills, within IFCOs through formal and workplace training, particularly on gathering of evidence and building of case files.	**PCEO** All IFCOs

ONGOING ACTION: 2E) Sea-going enforcement asset management	• Provision and maintenance of KEIFCA vessels for the purposes of enforcement activities. • Provision and maintenance of vessel-based equipment used for sea-based enforcement. • Explore best available equipment options. • Planning and reporting to the Authority of operation, maintenance and refit of vessels	**PVOO K** **PVOO E** SNR IFCO (S) K SNR IFCO (S) E
ONGOING ACTION: 2F) Enforcement activities – sea-based	• Maintain a visible patrol presence at sea to promote compliance, gather intelligence and detect offences. • Undertaking enforcement activities: boarding and gear with the aim of achieving full compliance with all local and national regulations. • Collection of information related to KEIFCA responsibilities and partner organisations • Prioritisation of detection and prevention of offences and operations as specified in the risk register. • Intelligence-led enforcement taskings. • Use body-worn video to promote with compliance and sound evidence gathering. • Support MMO/DEFRA in national taskings by providing charter patrols when required.	**PVOO E** **PVOO K** SNR IFCO (S) E SNR IFCO (S) K All IFCOs
ONGOING ACTION: 2G) Shore based enforcement asset management	• Provision and maintenance of vehicles for shore-based compliance and enforcement. • Maintain shore-based equipment capable of carrying out surveillance and enforcement. • Introduce systematic checks for upkeep of shore-based enforcement equipment. • Planning/reporting to Authority of operation, maintenance, and refit of key equipment • Explore best available equipment options (including PPE, scales and drones)	**SNR IFCO (S) E** **SNR IFCO (S) K** PCEO
ONGOING ACTION: 2H) Enforcement activities – shore-based	• Maintain a visible patrol presence on shore to promote compliance, gather intelligence and detect offences. • Undertake enforcement activities, landings of vessels, inspections of vehicles and premises with the aim of achieving full compliance with local and national regulations. • Collection of information related to KEIFCA interests and those of partner organisations. • Intelligence-led enforcement taskings. • Use body-worn video to promote with compliance and sound evidence gathering. • Day-to-day maintenance of vehicles used for shore patrols and enforcement.	**IFCOs** SNR IFCO (S) ERCM
ONGOING ACTION: 2I) Enforcement training	• Continue to support development and implementation of the accredited program. • Officers to attend IFCA Competent Officer training course on a regular rotating basis. • Ensure updates to legislation and procedure are shared and processes updated internally. • Review, update and improve CRIB book for officer training and to maintain consistent enforcement approaches in the field. • Officers attend regular external training courses to refresh skillsets. • Run a refresher course for EA cross-warrants. • Internal and on-the job training delivered to maintain enforcement skills, regular feedback given to officers to uphold best practise.	**DCIFCO** PCEO PVOO K PVOO E
2K) Marine Protected Area enforcement	• MPA byelaws included in risk register • Development of operational planning for MPAs in line with schedule of enforcement. • Identify MPAs that require increased patrol effort via TCG process. • Include new MPA bottom towed gear prohibited areas in patrol planning.	**PCEO**

2L) Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM)	• Update the authority on benefits of REM as a fisheries management tool. • Engage with other IFCAs and DEFRA in quarterly meetings to share best practise in REM workstreams. • Contribute to national IFCA REM Strategy. • Work with Rewire/Fastview to ensure TECFO devices are fully operational before the start of the 2026 fishery, including camera and gear sensor features. • Develop a policy for REM use. • Review and analyse REM data applications for use in Geographical Information Systems. • Include REM as a licence condition in the 2026 TECFO fishery in 2026 fishery. • Explore use of machine learning algorithms to automate processes for cockle fishery applications. • Support use of REM for clam fishery trials under code of conduct.	**PCEO** **DCIFCO** **PVOO E**
2M) Manila Clam trial fishery	• Allocate officer and patrol vessel resources to monitoring Manila Clam trial fishery in Spring 2026. • Support use of REM for clam fishery trials under code of conduct.	**CIFCO** PCEO PVOO K PVOO E

Annual Enforcement Plan/Risk Register - Schedule of planned compliance activity for 2026-2027

In undertaking its regulatory responsibilities, KEIFCA starts from the position that the vast majority of the community of people, organisations and industries using the marine area are compliant with the regulations and controls that affects them. KEIFCA works to try to ensure that all parties understand both what rules apply to their industry and the rationale for the regulation being necessary. Full compliance with national and local fisheries and marine conservation legislation is the overall aim of the Authority's enforcement regime. This aim is best achieved through the adoption of an adaptive co-management approach to fisheries management.

KEIFCA oversees a diverse range of fishing activities within the district, driven by the variety of marine habitats found in the North Sea, Thames Estuary, and Eastern Channel. These habitats support various commercial species in our waters at different stages throughout the year. At its inception, KEIFCA identified 18 key species as the focal point of its work, comprising both finfish of commercial and recreational importance and various shellfish species.

Unlike finfish, which migrate in and out of the District, inshore shellfish stocks—such as crab, lobster, cockles, whelks, oysters, and scallops—are typically more sedentary and therefore management at the local IFCA level is most appropriate for these species. In addition to the traditionally exploited shellfish stocks listed above. In 2024 we took steps to develop management strategies for Manila clams, which have recently proliferated in the Thames, and this trial fishery will resume in 2026. Key commercial finfish species managed by KEIFCA include sole, bass, thornback ray, smoothhound, and, to a lesser extent, cod, alongside species of less significance like tope and grey mullet. These stocks form the foundation of our enforcement strategy, with targeted, intelligence-led compliance checks tasked via the tactical Tasking and Coordination Group (TCG) process.

The officers that were recruited in 2024 are now warranted and have gained valuable practical experience in their role, which has strengthened our enforcement capacity, enabling us to deliver more effective operations across the District. Building and maintaining strong working relationships with partner agencies will remain a priority, as we continue to focus on shared targets with partners at the Environment Agency, Local Authority Environmental Health, Border Force, Marine Management Organisation, and neighbouring IFCAs.

In spring 2026, whelks, bass and the Manila clam trial will be the key priorities within our risk register. Although the clam trial will still be run under a voluntary code of conduct rather than a full byelaw, participating vessels will remain subject to regular inspections and oversight, creating a high workload for patrol vessel crews while the trial is underway. June will once again bring a particular focus on the Thames cockle fishery as it enters its second full season under the new regulating order. Ongoing monitoring of compliance with the updated spatial boundaries and regulations will be essential as the fishery matures. Later in the summer, the Cockle Permit Fishery is expected to open, and as with the TECFO fishery, spatial areas will create additional fishing opportunities for permit vessels. This will require an updated and responsive compliance approach from our enforcement teams. As autumn approaches, bass compliance activity will increase as usual, accompanied by continued monitoring of the next stage of the Manila clam trial fishery. As temperatures fall into winter, our compliance efforts will once again shift towards the whelk fishery, a vital stock for many vessels during the colder months.

As the fisheries landscape continues to evolve, KEIFCA remains committed to staying ahead of the curve by embracing the latest technological advancements in fisheries management. Key initiatives for 2026-27 include the deployment development and roll-out of an IFCA-specific Mobile Working App for recording inspections and furthering the development of REM applications and strategy. Additionally, we will align our compliance objectives with those set out in newly published Fishery Management Plans (FMPs), particularly focusing on Cockle, Whelk and Bass FMP outputs.

By combining strategic enforcement, innovative technology, and strong partnerships, KEIFCA is committed to safeguarding sustainable fisheries management through the delivery of an overt, fair and proportionate compliance regime.

Planning and operation

Ensuring that we get the right balance of compliance and enforcement alongside our other areas of work is a continual challenge, and one which requires a good level of base planning to achieve success. As a result, there is a structured approach to compliance activities which is best shown in Figure 1 below. This structure is designed to factor in the annual risks and proactive responses to those risks identified in this document and combine them with reactive responses to emerging risks throughout the year.

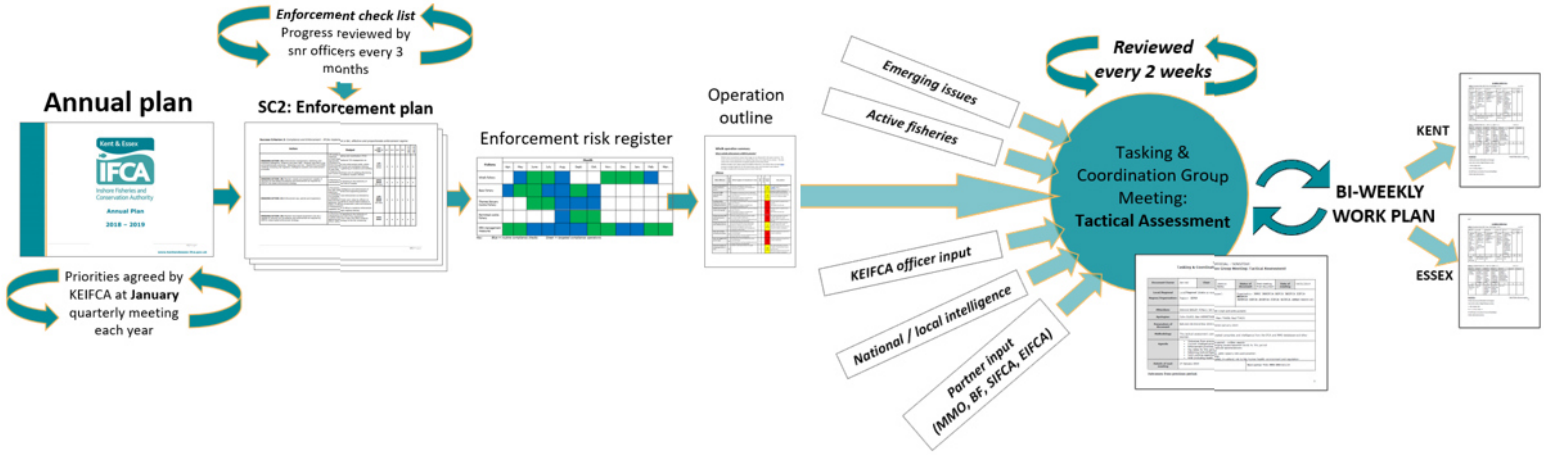


Figure 1. Diagram showing the structure of enforcement planning and operation

Risk register

KEIFCA officers carry out enforcement patrols throughout the year, responding to the changes in fishing effort for a range of key species subject to seasonal opportunities. The table below indicates our typical schedule for focusing on key enforcement risks in relation to local species of commercial (and recreational in some cases such as bass) significance. Green highlighted months show peaks in fishing effort for a fishery and therefore increased compliance risk, necessitating specific operations and proactive tasking of enforcement assets to monitor compliance and detect illegal activity. Blue highlighted months show times when a fishery is still likely to be actively exploited but compliance risk is lower, and therefore enforcement effort will be on a routine basis or in response to specific intelligence. This approach provides a basis for a seasonal, risk-prioritised enforcement regime throughout the year. It should be noted that in addition to compliance and enforcement work, this schedule balances with the other competing demands on staff and vessel time, particularly annual survey programmes. Working in partnership with partner enforcement agencies such as the MMO, Environment Agency, Border Force and Police work collaboratively to enforce the law in an efficient, effective, and proportionate way. This collaborative approach brings value for the taxpayer and makes best use of limited budgets and resources.

Key Fishery	**Month**											
	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.
Whelks												
Bass												
Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery												
Permit cockle fishery												
MPA management measures												
Manila clams												

Key: ***Blue*** *= routine compliance checks* ***Green*** *= targeted compliance operations*

Fishery Management Plans (FMP)

The workstreams outlined below highlight the key fishery compliance risks for the coming year, which will be addressed through strategic and operational planning with targeted enforcement outcomes. As part of the post-EU exit reforms established under the Fisheries Act 2020, the government continues to roll out national Fishery Management Plans (FMPs), with the first plans published in December 2023 and further plans published most recently in December 2025. FMPs are long-term, evidence-based action plans that set out clear goals and management interventions to secure the sustainable future of priority fisheries across the UK. Many of these plans relate directly to fisheries within the KEIFCA district, and KEIFCA will continue to support and implement the objectives of relevant FMPs where they align with our remit and operational capacity.

Key fisheries

Cockle fishery compliance

The KEIFCA district, and particularly the Thames Estuary, is one of the most productive regions for cockles production both nationally and internationally. KEIFCA closely manages these key cockle stocks to achieve maximum economic benefit to fishers balanced with safeguarding stock sustainability and the protection of marine habitats. Cockle management encompasses two distinct fisheries management regimes that operate within the district: the Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery Order (TECFO) fishery which covers the main Thames Estuary, and the Cockle Fishery Flexible Permit Byelaw which manages cockle harvesting across the remainder of the district. Cockles are a lucrative commodity and therefore regulations are strict, meaning targeted operation orders to monitor compliance and ensure all regulations are adhered to is paramount to the continued success and future sustainability of these fisheries. We will enter the second year of the new TECFO regulating order this year, and the use of REM to monitor spatial management measures will be of paramount importance.

The TECFO operation will be implemented first in June, starting with biosecurity inspections and pre-emptive gear compliance checks. Officers will effectively communicate with licenced fishermen throughout, promoting understanding and positive working relationships with vessel operators. Once fishing commences officers will carry out boarding inspections at sea to assess damage rates of the gear throughout the fishery. Seagoing effort will be supported by teams on shore conducting landing inspections to ensure compliance with catch limits. If and when offences are detected during physical inspections, officers will utilise body worn video cameras to gather best evidence. Compliance was high in the 2025 fishery; however officers will remain vigilant to ensure that a good track record carries forward into 2026.

The 2025 roll-out of Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) across the Thames cockle fleet marked a major step forward in collaborative fisheries management, with industry volunteering to adopt the technology, potentially allowing more flexible future management arrangements. Each vessel was fitted with an integrated camera and gear-sensor system, including three cameras positioned to monitor the dredge, riddle and hold. As with any first-year deployment, the programme encountered some early challenges, but the overall outcome has been highly positive: all 15 licensed vessels are now equipped with REM. Looking ahead to 2026, KEIFCA intends to introduce REM as a mandatory licence condition for all TECFO vessels. However, recognising that this is still an emerging technology, we

will continue to work closely with licence holders to undertake a structured assessment of system performance, ensuring both KEIFCA and industry have full confidence that REM is operating effectively before the season begins.

Once the fishery is underway, KEIFCA is also exploring the use of machine-learning algorithms using the CCTV footage captured by the REM systems. By analysing video of cockle bags as they are filled, these algorithms have the potential to automatically identify catch rates and quantities in near-real time. This capability would significantly enhance the application of flexible management measures within the fishery, as KEIFCA would be able to rely on precise, independently verified data showing both the volumes of cockles caught and the specific locations where they were harvested. In turn, this would allow vessel skippers to split their daily catch across multiple harvesting areas during a single fishing trip, something not previously possible due to the lack of a reliable method for verifying the quantities of cockles taken from each area.

Bass regulation compliance

Since 2015 the UK and EU have implemented a joint management approach to bass fisheries following a sharp decline in stocks across European waters. Since these measures were introduced, there has been an increase in adult stock biomass but recruitment of juvenile bass remains low. As a result, regulations which restrict bass fishing in both the commercial and recreational sector continue to apply and remain a high compliance priority in the KEIFCA district. IFCOs will continue to work closely with partners at the MMO to target non-compliance with bass regulations, focusing on high-risk areas of the district at peak seasonal times. Based on cumulative intelligence, we will continue to implement joint operations with neighbouring IFCAs and the MMO to target illegal activities such as drift netting and misreporting. Recreational bass fishers will also be inspected routinely to ensure that current catch limits and minimum sizes are adhered to.

Bass FMP

In 2025, KEIFCA contributed to the development of the Bass Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) through participation in national working groups, including the Bass Management Group and the Bass Authorisation Review Task and Finish Group. This work resulted in 24 recommendations aimed at strengthening sustainable bass management, improving data collection, reducing bycatch, and ensuring future measures remain practical and enforceable. Key proposals include expanded access to authorisations, opportunities for new entrants, trials of lower-impact gears, bycatch allowance trials, and improved traceability initiatives.

For 2026–27, KEIFCA will focus on progressing elements of these recommendations at a regional level, particularly the potential for an inshore drift-netting scientific trial in collaboration with Eastern IFCA and local fishers. This will require coordinated delivery, effective stakeholder engagement, and robust monitoring through technologies such as REM and observer coverage. KEIFCA's continued involvement ensures that enforcement considerations and operational realities are embedded in the implementation of the Bass FMP, supporting a balanced approach to sustainability and inshore fishing opportunity.

Whelk compliance

KEIFCA will maintain a strong land- and sea-based enforcement presence throughout 2026–27 to support the sustainable management of the whelk fishery, focusing on compliance with permit conditions and the Whelk Fishery Flexible Permit Byelaw. Priority will be given to gear inspections to ensure that no unpermitted pots are used within the permit area and that all pots meet escape-hole specifications to

improve juvenile survivability. Catch inspections will be intensified under a dedicated operation order, supported by continued engagement with permit holders to promote accurate and timely submission of catch returns. Alongside routine compliance work, KEIFCA will support industry in exploring practical measures to reduce the proportion of undersize whelks in catches, including the development of more selective gear designs.

Angling education and compliance

Engagement with the recreational angling sector will remain a core priority for the compliance team during the upcoming year. We will seek to expand on educational initiatives, with a particular focus on bass regulations in line with FMP objectives, by developing engagement tools and promotional materials on a national scale with partner agencies. We will also publish information in local tide tables and make regular visits to angling shops to distribute free minimum size stickers. Targeted inspections of individuals and recreational vessels that pose a high risk to compliance objectives will be tasked through the TCG process as current intelligence emerges. Increasing effort to inspect recreational charter boat trips will feature in the coming year.

Marine Protected Area (MPA) compliance

Three additional MCZ areas are due to be closed to bottom towed fishing gear in 2026: Dover to Deal, Goodwin Sands and Swanscombe. This will almost double the extent of prohibited areas for bottom towed gear from 236 km^2 to 406 km^2 of sea area in Kent and Essex waters. This increase in protected areas will logically increase the need for regular sea patrols to cover these designations, however the arrival of the new Essex-based 10.5m cabin RIB "Nemo" in 2026 will provide the ideal platform for this work. The Essex RIB will provide the mainstay of compliance patrol effort within Essex and Medway estuaries, including the new Swanscombe site in the upper reaches of the Thames. Meanwhile FPV Nerissa will focus on the Eastern and Southern Kent areas including the two new sites Dover to Deal and Goodwin Sands, the latter which forms the inshore part of a wider protected area with management measures outside the 6nm limit regulated under MMO byelaws.

A statutory instrument for Inshore Vessel Monitoring Systems (IVMS) is anticipated in 2026, therefore our ability to monitor protected areas will be enhanced with live spatial data becoming available for the entire fleet. As such, we anticipate being able to monitor compliance and gather intelligence relating to protected areas in the Kent and Essex district far more efficiently and effectively than previously.

Success Criterion 3: Management measures - *IFCAs use evidence based and appropriate measures to manage the sustainable exploitation of sea fisheries resources and deliver marine environmental protection within their districts*

The IFCAs were created as statutory inshore regulators by the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. They are relevant authorities for implementing international environmental commitments including the Birds, Habitats, Water and Marine Strategy Framework Directives and make an important contribution to securing a network of well managed marine protected areas, including European Marine Sites and Marine Conservation Zones. Fisheries Management Plans identify local management measures which should be based on evidence; be timely; subject to appropriate consultation and in step with national initiatives and priorities. An IFCA should balance the social and economic benefits of exploiting sea fisheries resources with the need to protect the environment. It should make a contribution to sustainable development.

Outcomes

1. The IFCA will identify issues likely to affect sustainable management of the marine environment in the IFC District; undertake risk assessment and gap analysis; review appropriateness of existing measures; evaluate management options and develop and implement proportionate marine management solutions.

2. The IFCA will support implementation of a well-managed network of marine protected areas by: developing a range of criteria based management options; implementing management measures to ensure that inshore fisheries activities comply with the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and the revised approach to managing commercial fisheries in European Marine Sites; and that local management contributes to delivery of targets for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Water Framework Directive and Marine Plans.

3. The IFCA will develop Fisheries Management Plans for priority species where appropriate. Shared objectives will be developed with identified partners; actions identified, and best practice reflected so that management makes a contribution to sustainable development.

Indicators

SC3A The IFCA will record site specific management considerations for Marine Protected Areas and report progress to the Authority

SC3B The IFCA will publish data analysis and evidence supporting new management measures on its website.

SC3C Management information (e.g. sampling and/or survey results) will be collected periodically after new management measures have been implemented, to demonstrate the extent of the effectiveness of the intervention.

SC3D The IFCA will have developed a range of criteria-based management options that are explained to stakeholders through the IFCA website and reviewed by 31 March each year.

SC3E New IFCA management measures selected for development and implementation are delivered within agreed timescales.

SC3F The IFCA will include shared agreed objectives and actions from Fisheries Management Plans in its own Annual Plan, which will be published by 31 March each year.

SC3G Progress made in relevant Fisheries Management Plan areas, including Maximum Sustainable Yield commitments, will be noted in the IFCA's Annual Report.

Actions	Outputs	Member of staff responsible for outputs
ONGOING ACTION: 3A) Administration of KEIFCA licences and permits	• Issuing of cockle licences/permits and update letters. • Hold cockle industry meetings and KEIFCA cockle management meetings. • Collecting and collating cockle catch returns. • Issuing of whelk permits, whelk tags and update letters. • Collecting and collating whelk catch returns.	**AO** OM DCIFCO
ONGOING ACTION: 3B) Administration of new KEIFCA legislation (e.g. Byelaws and Regulating Orders)	• Reports to Authority meetings • When required seeking legal opinion and compiling legal papers. • Minutes of meetings and decisions • Advertising new legislation and providing admin support for consultations. • Sending documents to the MMO or DEFRA	**CIFCO** OM AO
ONGOING ACTION 3C) Respond to MMO marine licence applications	• Reply to MMO licence applications • Lease with the local industry if licence applications are of specific concern to local fishers	**IFCO (CE)***
ONGOING ACTION: 3D) Set up processes to support the running of TECFO 2024	• Work with the TECFO 2024 licence holders to ensure that all new regulations and licence conditions are understood and complied with. • The Cockle Officer and the Principal Scientific & Conservation Officer will work with the industry to further the objectives of the management plan (reduce damage rates and group impact, collect socio-economic data etc).	**DCIFCO** CO PSCO
3E) Take steps to explore the potential of a future Manila clam fishery	• Run a benthic impact trial to monitor the impact of the Manila clam fishing gear on the seabed and it's the species it supports • Work with Natural England to create an evidenced based pathway, whereby a future clam fishery could pass a Habitat Regulation Assessment. • Start the process of developing future manila clam management options.	**CIFCO** **IFCO (SC)** DCIFCO PSCO
3F) Provide support for process of SE Marine Plan review and update	• Support DEFRA and AFICA in role to develop and update Marine Spatial Plans for southeast • Attend meetings and provide input and data required for marine planning	**IFCO (CE)*** PSCO

3G) Provide input into national Fisheries Management Plan workstreams	• Work with the AIFCA to help represent IFCAs in national FMP discussions (FMP lead for COG) • Provide support to national oversight groups and when required attend national meetings • Work with other IFCAs to compile FMP outputs at a national level and feedback to DEFRA	**CIFCO** PSCO DCIFCO
3H) Take a lead role in helping DEFRA implement the management measures from Fisheries Management Plans - *High priority*	**Bass FMP** • Feed into the new bass management group(s) and the review of the current domestic bass authorisation system. • Work with CEFAS and Eastern IFCA to run a drift net trial for bass in North Essex if project agreed by DEFRA • Improve communication with stakeholders on bass management and enforcement and highlight joint working with the MMO.	**PECO** **CIFCO**
	Whelk FMP • Take a led role in the introduction of a national whelk fishing permit scheme or entitlement • Take a led role in the potential introduction of regional minimum sizes for whelks. • Feed into the collection of whelk data and development of stock estimates and models – help develop national dashboard • Help develop a data collection programme and feed in KEIFCA data into national data sets.	**CIFCO** PSCO
	Cockle FMP • Help establish a national cockle FMP forum • Develop a framework to support the role of the FMP in realising sustainable cockle fisheries in English waters • Help further the data collection framework for social and economic data used to inform management decisions.	**IFCO (CO)** **DCIFCO**
3I) Assist DEFRA in implementing the management measures from Fisheries Management Plans - *Medium priority*	**Southern North Sea and Channel skates and rays FMP** • Help engage and disseminate proposed voluntary guidelines • Support alternative approaches to the current group total allowable catches (TAC)	**CIFCO** PSCO
	Channel / Southern North Sea demersal non-quota species FMP • Feed into emerging cephalopod fisheries work • To contribute to new cuttlefish, squid and octopus management decisions.	**CIFCO** PSCO
	Crab & Lobster FMP • Work with other IFCAs and local stakeholders to feed into future crab and lobster management as it develops.	**CIFCO** PSCO DCIFCO
	Scallops FMP • Contribute to area-based closures/ area-based management discussions on scallop stocks.	**CIFCO** PSCO DCIFCO

Success Criterion 4: Governance and Training - *IFCAs have appropriate governance in place and staff are trained and professional*

IFCAs are statutory authorities and sit within the local government family. Authority members may be either general members or local Councillors. They comply with Codes of Conduct and the Standing Orders that apply to meetings of local government committees. General members are appointed on merit, through open competition and for a term. They are subject to an annual performance appraisal. An IFCA is funded by levy, charged to its member councils. Funding originates in local taxation. An IFCA is accountable for its use of public resources and should ensure that a proper auditing regime provides confidence in its commitment and spend of public money. It should make effective use of its resources, including staff and assets. An IFCA has a statutory obligation to prepare and publish Annual Plans and Annual Reports. IFCA Committee meetings will be held in public unless material is either confidential, or exempt within the meaning of the Local Government Act 1972.

Outcomes

1. The IFCA will demonstrate its long-term strategic approach to sustainable marine management by having appropriate plan making, review, update and amendment procedures in place. The IFCA will record its performance against corporate outcomes and indicators as soon as practically possible following the end of the financial year.

2. Staff performance management systems will be in place that link to the IFCA success criteria. There will be an induction procedure for new joiners. Staff training and development needs will be identified. Performance will be managed and, where necessary, improvement procedures will be followed.

3. The IFCA Committee will be supported by an organised, efficient and effective secretariat. New members will receive an induction pack and briefing from the Authority. There will be a rolling twelve-month schedule of quarterly Authority meetings. Notices of meetings and documentation will be made available in line with Standing Orders

Indicators

SC4A The IFCA will publish a plan on its website by 31 March, setting out the main objectives and priorities for the next financial year. A copy will be sent to the Secretary of State.

SC4B After the end of each financial year, the IFCA will publish a report on its website describing its activities, performance and a summary of audited financial information in that year, by 30 November. A copy will be sent to the Secretary of State.

SC4C IFCA staff will have annual performance management plans in place. Annual appraisals for all staff will have been completed by 31 May each year.

SC4D An efficient secretariat of IFCA staff support IFCA Authority meetings which are held quarterly and are quorate. Meeting documentation will meet Standing Orders.

SC4E The IFCA will have demonstrated, in its Annual Report, how marine, land and water management mechanisms in the Inshore Fisheries & Conservation District have worked responsively and effectively together.

Actions	Outputs	Member of staff responsible for outputs
ONGOING ACTION: 4A) Create and manage KEIFCA annual budget and reserves	• General admin - Inputting invoices, travel & expenses, purchase card etc. • Annual budget with quarterly updates - Compile budget, budget meetings etc. • Two meetings per annum with internal audit • Manage and coordinate funding applications	**OM** AO
ONGOING ACTION: 4B) Produce an agreed KEIFCA annual plan and an accompanying annual report	• Create and publish 2027-2028 annual plan and 2026-2027 annual report • Document and present to Authority (display on website).	**CIFCO** DCIFCO OM
ONGOING ACTION: 4C) Run and record IFCA meetings	• Run and provide support for quarterly IFCA meetings and technical panel meetings. • Letters/actions from meeting. • Handbook for members	**OM** AO
ONGOING ACTION: 4D) Address any HR staff matters and run the staff monitoring and assessment systems	• Responsibility for day-to-day HR matters – contracts, payroll, pensions, timesheets etc. • Run current staff performance monitoring system and compile staff performance documentation. • Recruiting new staff.	**CIFCO** OM AO
ONGOING ACTION: 4E) Facilitate appropriate training for all staff	• Sea tickets/training • Survey training (ATV training) etc. • Compile official documentation proving training has been completed.	**DCIFCO** OM
ONGOING ACTION: 4F) Run the KEIFCA health and safety systems	• Annual reporting of H&S issues to Authority • Regular meeting of H&S committee	**OM** DCIFCO
4G) Finish implementing the new MCA workboat code 3 requirements	• Make all KEIFCA vessels compliant with MCA workboat code 3 requirements • Embed the SEAFLUX management system and associated documentation into every day working practices. • Explore the use of the SEAFLUX system to manage safety systems across KEIFCA • Skippers work with other IFCAs to share best practice and new ways of working	**DCIFCO** **PVOO** **Snr IFCO (S)**
4H) Embed a new a staff performance and monitoring system	• Work with staff to develop a 6 monthly performance and review system • Support Principal Vessel Operations Officer and new skippers in developing new skills to further their roles • Develop the process for experienced IFCOs to pass the required stages to become Snr IFCOs.	**CIFCO** **DCIFCO** OM

Success Criterion 5: Evidence and Science - *IFCAs make the best use of evidence to deliver their objectives.*

Definition: IFCAs are statutory regulators for their Inshore Fisheries and Conservation District. Decision making should be based on evidence. All IFCAs are supported by officers who pool their expertise and share best practice as a Technical Advisory Group (TAG). A programme of research activity and monitoring is planned, developed, and updated in consultation with partners. The programme informs management decisions and supports justification for additional research and evidence gathering.

Outcomes

1. A strategic research plan that contributes to greater understanding of the marine environment and delivery of cost-effective management of sea fisheries resources.

2. Standard Operating Procedures describe how data is captured and shared with principal partners.

3. A list of research databases held by the IFCA and the frequency of their review.

4. Non-confidential meta-data collected through the IFCA research programme should be recorded in a database available to the marine research community.

Indicators

SC5A The IFCA will demonstrate progress that has been made towards identifying its evidence needs by publishing a research plan each year.

SC5B The IFCA will publish a research report annually that demonstrates how evidence has supported decision making.

SC5C The IFCA's contribution to TAG and progress that has been made towards a national evidence needs programme will be recorded in the IFCA's Annual Report.

Actions	Outputs	Member of staff responsible for outputs
ONGOING ACTION: 5A) Annual Research Plan & Report	• Prepare the annual research plan: Assess annual research priorities, plan time and resource. • Prepare the Annual Research Report: Report on achievement of objectives set in Annual Research Plan and demonstrating use of evidence for decision making	**PSCO**
ONGOING ACTION: 5B) Chair TAG meetings	• Organise & host IFCA TAG meetings, providing KEIFCA updates & reporting back • Lead TAG – REM workshop	**PSCO**
ONGOING ACTION: 5C) Maintain scientific survey equipment	• Maintenance of KEIFCA vessels and equipment for the purposes of scientific surveys and data collection • Provision and maintenance of vehicles for shore based scientific surveys and data collection • Planning and reporting to the Authority of operation, maintenance, and refit of key equipment	**PVOO** **SNR IFCO (S)**
ONGOING ACTION: 5D) MPA management	• Correspondence with MMO on offshore MPA management • Fishing footprint in MPAs: Develop better data collection methods on fishing impacts using REM. • Explore opportunities to promote the importance of MPAs and how fisheries management measures currently work with partner organisations with experience in engagement	**KIFCO (SC)**
ONGOING ACTION: 5E) Engagement with major marine developments in the district and reply to consultations	• Evaluate and Prioritise engagement • Liaise with relevant Fishers Groups • Provide verbal and written feedback when there is a potential impact on local fisheries, MPAs or byelaws.	**KIFCO** KIFCO (SC) PSCO
ONGOING ACTION: 5F) Evidence gathering and reporting for the TEFCO and permit cockle fisheries	• Plan and carry out annual cockle stock assessment surveys (inc. cockle samples for MESL) • Delivery of recommendations relating to stock management (inc. data entry and analysis). • Organisation and delivery of pre-fishery stakeholder meeting (License holders): • Production of Habitat Regulations Assessment, including consultation with NE • Assess impact on seabed of additional T24 licenses (funding applications)	**PSCO** **DCIFCO** All IFCOs
ONGOING ACTION: 5G) Evidence gathering and reporting for the whelk permit fishery and National whelk FMP	• Collate, analyse and prepare whelk landings report • Improve alignment with FMP objectives • Routinely collect water temperature data	**PSCO** OSO SNR IFCO (S)
ONGOING ACTION: 5H) Native oyster fishery management	• Carry out an oyster population survey • Continued membership of ENORI	**PSCO** PVOO E
ACTION: 5I) Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) delivery	• Actively participate in delivering the FMP objectives such as data and research elements. • Continue to contribute to Whelk Management Group (WMG) and Whelk Working Group (WWG) • Take role in implementation groups where appropriate	**CIFCO** PSCO

ACTION: 5J) Evidence gathering for a potential Manila clam fishery	• Organising and mobilising the Manila clam trial • Production of Habitat Regulations Assessment, including consultation with NE. • Fishing Effort Stock Impact Study • Riddling Study 2: Refine riddle bar spacing for sorting clams • Develop standardised units for landing clams	**KIFCO (SC)** **PSCO** CIFCO DCIFCO
ACTION: 5K) Produce a Manila clam population report	• Survey planning and delivery of population assessments before and after trail surveys • Produce a report that compiles and analyses all our current and historic clam data including the results of aging work from Bangor University.	**KIFCO (SC)** **PSCO** CIFCO DCIFCO
ACTION: 5L) Develop a cockle and clam stock assessment database	• Continue to develop a cockle and clam stock assessment data recording methods, database, data analysis & reporting mechanisms	**PSCO**
ACTION: 5M) Contribute to the CHLE project	• Continue to actively contribute to Coastal Health Livelihoods Project with AIFCAs • Explore options to facilitate acting as a coastal node for environmental phenomena	**DCIFCO** **PSCO**
ACTION: 5N) Co-supervise PhD	• Co-supervise PhD study (University of Essex) to better understand whelk, clam and cockle environmental envelope	**PSCO** CIFCO

Annual Research Plan - 2026-2027

In 2026-2027 KEIFCA's research priorities are to collect the evidence and facilitate research to; 1) improve our understanding of the impacts on the seabed of an additional fishing licence in the TECFO cockle fishery, 2) improve the assessment methods used to understand the population status of Manila clams, and 3) commence a PhD study that aims to assess the impacts of Marine Heat Waves on shellfish and fisheries in the Thames Estuary. KEIFCA's research strategy categorises research and evidence gathering into three broad themes:

Theme 1: Marine Protected Areas - *Implement robust management measures for MCZs in KEIFCA's District.*

KEIFCA will continue to carry out Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) assessments for fisheries that take place within MPAs and provide consultation responses to National Marine Infrastructure such as port development, telecommunications, wind farm and cable-laying, as well as engage with local planning decisions when appropriate. As the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear (Prohibited Areas) Byelaw 2024 enters the final DEFRA review stage, we will start to focus our efforts more on MPA data collection and improving our understanding of fishing impacts on MPA features.

At the intersection between MPAs, Fisheries and Evidence, the work that KEIFCA undertakes related to the management of the TECFO cockle fishery is central to our research efforts. There is a need for evidence around the impact that an additional fishing licence in T24

cockle fishery has on the MPAs in which it takes place. KEIFCA hopes to secure funding to carry out a detailed analysis of the footprint of the fishery, relative to the number of licensed fishing vessels.

Theme 2: Sustainable Fisheries *- support sustainable fisheries management and alignment with FMPs.*

KEIFCA aims to better align its fisheries workstreams to the objectives of the Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs). To date, eleven FMPs have been published, including plans for whelks and cockles which are two key fisheries in KEIFCA's District. KEIFCA already contributes to FMPs through its own data collection programme. In 2026-2027, we will work more closely with other IFCAs; as well as national research and governance bodies, to help align the data we collect with national objectives and national data collection programmes. We will actively engage and contribute to relevant working groups where the data specification to address the FMP objectives are being developed. Furthermore, KEIFCA will ensure its research programme continues to provide the essential data required to run sustainable fisheries in the District.

Cockles: There are two cockle fisheries in the district, namely TECFO 2024 and Permit fishery. As in previous years, KEIFCA will carry out the annual stock assessments of the cockle populations in the Thames Estuary to ensure sustainable fisheries through responsible management. This is a core piece of our annual workplan that dominates the research agenda between April - May and again in early September. These surveys collect information on the spatial distribution, abundance, biomass, age structure and spatfall. From these data, stock size, growth, mortality and recruitment trends are estimated and are used to inform annual catch quotas from fished beds in the District. Sea-going surveys take place from FPVs *Tamesis* and *Nerissa*, and land-based surveys are carried out using All-Terrain Vehicles to access the nearshore subtidal habitats.

Whelks: In 2026-2027, KEIFCA will work closely with CEFAS, other IFCAs and join national efforts through the Whelk Management Group (WMG) and the Whelk Working Group that aim to better understand the stock boundaries of whelks and Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE), as identified as top priorities for the FMP. We will share data and harmonise our data collection programme with national efforts that may come under a new national whelk management system.

Native Oysters: The native oyster fishery in the Blackwater, Crouch, Roach, and Colne Estuaries (BCRC) MCZ has been closed since 2015 because of concerns over its depleted stock levels. A management plan was developed for the site, in which criteria were set out around the stock status which help inform whether IFCA should reopen the fishery. Since 2020, KEIFCA has recorded a significant decline in the abundance, and a contraction in the distribution range, of native oysters in the MCZ. The criteria set out in the BCRC MCZ management plan requires a minimum threshold for biomass and a sustained increasing trend thereof to allow the oyster fishery to be opened within the MCZ – as such the fishery has remained closed. We plan to survey the native oyster population in the BCRC MCZ in October 2026.

Manila clams: The second trial fishery is due to start again in the spring of 2026. Within the research component of the trial fishery, we will: 1) carry out an assessment of the clam population, 2) assess the effects of fishing effort on the population, and 3) assess the footprint of the fishery using Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM).

In 2026-2027 we will review our stock assessment surveys and improve our understanding of age classification relative to size structure with the aim of obtaining better direct estimates of the population size and ultimately improve the accuracy of catch limits. We will analyse burial depths of clams collected in 2024 to inform the validity of our survey methods and ensure that we are providing reliable survey results.

The Manila clam fishery overlaps with MPAs and consequently, like with cockles, it is essential that we have a good understanding of the level of impact the fishery has on the designated features of the MPAs. We plan to use Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) to identify fishing activity that will allow KEIFCA to quantify the fishery's environmental footprint. This will provide critical evidence to inform the HRA assessment for the fishery – as required for fisheries that operate inside MPAs. Breakage rates are important for informing the additional damage and mortality that is caused by the fishery over and above that which the fishery removes as part of the catch.

Theme 3: Access to Evidence *– Improve our database and support sustainable fisheries and MPA management.*

KEIFCA will continue to provide data, evidence and information as required in working with others, and especially for FMP objectives. KEIFCA has been developing a centralised database to house key datasets over the past few years, which has now been expanded to include cockle and Manila clam distribution and biomass data. This is a critical piece of work that ensures accurate and reliable evidence provision as required for example, when setting Total Allowable Catch (TAC) limits for the fishery, and we are committed to continue to improve this critical asset.

PhD: In 2026-2027, Lola O'Mara will start her PhD under the supervision of Dr Michael Steinke and Prof Tom Cameron from the University of Essex, with co-supervision from Dr Phil Haupt (KEIFCA). Rising water temperatures, accompanied by more frequent and intense Marine Heat Waves (MHWs) are impacting shellfish and thereby impacting the future for fishers in the Thames Estuary. The PhD will assess the effects of water temperature stress (among other variables) on the survival, feeding rates, oxygen consumption, and reproductive behaviour of key shellfish species in the Thames Estuary. The PhD will use predicted future water temperature data to model the future shellfish seascape of the Thames. This will allow fishery managers to better inform our fishers and manage our fisheries. We look forward to the commencement of the PhD in January 2026.

Chairing TAG: In 2026-2027, KEIFCA's Principal Science and Conservation Officer, Phil Haupt, will be Chairing the Technical Advisory Group (TAG), in which the research leads from the various IFCAs and equivalents from the devolved administrations and other government agencies come together to exchange information and experience relating to fisheries and marine science and technology to improve cooperation and consistency between organisations, and help IFCAs be valued as national and international fisheries managers.

Research schedule

The following table illustrates the schedule for time bound research activities in 2026-2027. Activities coloured dark blue are ongoing actions and those coloured yellow are limited-time projects. The estimated number of days considers the time required to conduct the surveys and does not include time required for project planning, equipment maintenance or report writing. Some new projects are dependent on partnerships or collaborative working arrangements.

WORKSTREAMS WITH TIMEBOUND SURVEY ACTIVITIES	No. Days (No. Officer Days)	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
5F & J: Annual cockle & clam stock assessment surveys from sea	22 (88)													
5F & J: Cockle & clam stock assessment surveys from land	20 (80)													
5J: Clam: fishing effort study	20 (80)													
5J: Clam: Fishing footprint in MPAs: Delineating fishing tracks (REM)	10 (40)													
5J: Clam: riddle trials evidence to support bar spacing	10 (20)													
5H: BCRC MCZ Native oyster survey	10 (40)													

ONGOING WORKSTREAMS/ NEW PROJECTS

Research report publication schedule

Publication theme	Anticipated date	Authors
Annual cockle survey report	May 2026	PSCO
Annual Research Report	September 2026	PSCO
Manila clam trial fishery report	May 2026	PSCO
Whelk annual landings report	January 2027	OSO, PSCO

Structure and governance of the Authority

Structure

The Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Order 2010 makes provision for the establishment of the Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation District and for the Authority for that district. The Order lays out the membership and proceedings of the Authority and makes provision in relation to the expenses of the Authority and to the reimbursement of members' expenses.

Relevant Council	*No. of members*	*Percentage payment of KEIFCA levy*
Essex County Council	3	43.12%
Kent County Council	3	43.12%
Medway Council	1	7.55%
Southend on Sea Borough Council	1	2.42%
Thurrock Council	1	3.79%

The Order states that the Authority is to consist of 21 members, comprised of nine councillors, ten "general members" or MMO appointees (of which one must be an employee of the MMO, and two additional members from the EA and NE. The Order also lays out how the expenses of the Authority should be divided between the councils.

Governance

Good governance is at the heart of sound decision-making, and it is because of this that KEIFCA have already adopted key working documents that will aid the smooth and transparent working of the Authority (i.e. Code of Conduct, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, register of members' interests and a policy on Members' Allowances/Expenses). KEIFCA utilise Kent County Council for legal, constitutional, financial and HR support, as well as one-off support on procurement and other key activities.

List of Members *(**Chairman, *Vice-Chairman)*			
****J L Lamb**	MMO Appointee	**Cllr J Henderson**	Kent CC
***P J Nichols**	MMO Appointee	**Cllr M Lawes**	Kent CC
E Gilson	MMO Appointee	**Cllr J Finch**	Kent CC
P Wexham	MMO Appointee	**Cllr J Fleming**	Essex CC
E Hannam	MMO Appointee	**Cllr A Goggin**	Essex CC
T Ferry	MMO Appointee	**Cllr M Skeels**	Essex CC
R Turner	MMO Appointee	**Cllr G Coxshall**	Thurrock BC
C Collins	MMO Appointee	**Cllr S Curry**	Medway BC
W East	MMO Appointee	**Cllr C Mulroney**	Southend CC
A Baker	NE Representative		
L Faulkner	EA Representative		
J Rowley	MMO Representative		

Members

IFCA members are a vital component of helping KEIFCA deliver many of the key concepts expressed in the IFCA vision, but especially in helping to "secure the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry".

IFCA members attend the quarterly IFCA meetings, with some members also attending specialist Technical Panel meetings where specific issues are discussed in greater detail; recommendations from these meetings are then taken forward to the next full meeting of the Authority. The member's role within the organisation is to decide and comment on the strategy and direction of the organisation and to make key strategic decisions (e.g. agree on budget, staffing levels, stock management measures, etc.).

Staff

The officers and administration staff implement the strategic decisions that the Authority (i.e. members) have agreed. The IFCA staff, led by the Chief IFC Officer (Diagram 4), are responsible for the ongoing operations of KEIFCA (e.g. appointing staff, setting and managing staff performance, implementing the agreed stock management measures and enforcement etc.) and report back to the members on key issues and matters for discussion each quarter.

At present KEIFCA employs 13 full time staff, 1 part-time staff, a part time Clerk and a part time financial advisor. In addition to this the Authority also contributes to the services of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman. The structure and key roles of each member of staff are laid out in Fig.4. Officers across the organisation continue to be trained to undertake various tasks as this approach gives KEIFCA a huge amount of flexibility in being able to deliver all of KEIFCA's duties and react to events.

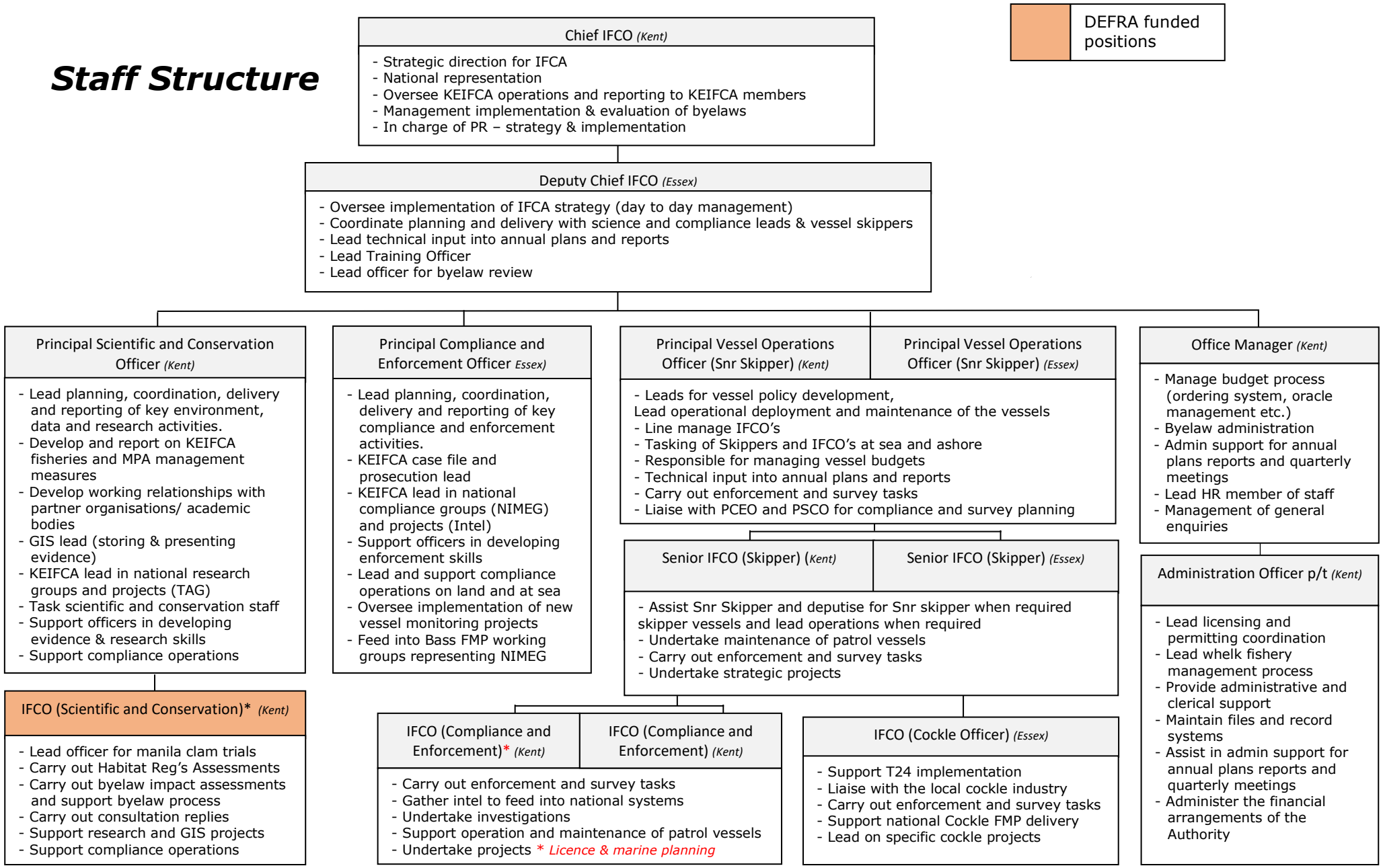
Staff performance and assessment

KEIFCA currently use a process similar to Kent County Council's (KCC) staff performance monitoring system. The system is based on a yearly review of an employee's performance using a series of objectives that are agreed between the employee's line manager and the employee. The objectives and the outputs of the employee relate back to the overall objectives in the annual plan. Depending upon how well an employee meets, or exceeds, the targets set during this process an employee may move up the incremental scale, this is dependant upon budgetary constraints and pay scale.

Training

There exists within KEIFCA a core understanding, level of experience and knowledge related to the range of work of the IFCA. Important training areas include; developing IFC officer enforcement and seamanship skills, building on survey skills within the organisation and developing officers' ability to undertake a range of surveys and helping staff expand their IT skills (including using GIS and website maintenance).

Staff Structure


DEFRA funded positions
Chief IFCO (Kent)
- Strategic direction for IFCA
- National representation
- Oversee KEIFCA operations and reporting to KEIFCA members
- Management implementation & evaluation of byelaws
- In charge of PR – strategy & implementation
Deputy Chief IFCO (Essex)
- Oversee implementation of IFCA strategy (day to day management)
- Coordinate planning and delivery with science and compliance leads & vessel skippers
- Lead technical input into annual plans and reports
- Lead Training Officer
- Lead officer for byelaw review
Principal Scientific and Conservation Officer (Kent)
- Lead planning, coordination, delivery and reporting of key environment, data and research activities.
- Develop and report on KEIFCA fisheries and MPA management measures
- Develop working relationships with partner organisations/ academic bodies
- GIS lead (storing & presenting evidence)
- KEIFCA lead in national research groups and projects (TAG)
- Task scientific and conservation staff
- Support officers in developing evidence & research skills
- Support compliance operations
Principal Compliance and Enforcement Officer Essex)
- Lead planning, coordination, delivery and reporting of key compliance and enforcement activities.
- KEIFCA case file and prosecution lead
- KEIFCA lead in national compliance groups (NIMEG) and projects (Intel)
- Support officers in developing enforcement skills
- Lead and support compliance operations on land and at sea
- Oversee implementation of new vessel monitoring projects
- Feed into Bass FMP working groups representing NIMEG
Principal Vessel Operations Officer (Snr Skipper) (Kent)
Principal Vessel Operations Officer (Snr Skipper) (Essex)
- Leads for vessel policy development,
Lead operational deployment and maintenance of the vessels
- Line manage IFCO's
- Tasking of Skippers and IFCO's at sea and ashore
- Responsible for managing vessel budgets
- Technical input into annual plans and reports
- Carry out enforcement and survey tasks
- Liaise with PCEO and PSCO for compliance and survey planning
Office Manager (Kent)
- Manage budget process (ordering system, oracle management etc.)
- Byelaw administration
- Admin support for annual plans reports and quarterly meetings
- Lead HR member of staff
- Management of general enquiries
Senior IFCO (Skipper) (Kent)
Senior IFCO (Skipper) (Essex)
- Assist Snr Skipper and deputise for Snr skipper when required skipper vessels and lead operations when required
- Undertake maintenance of patrol vessels
- Carry out enforcement and survey tasks
- Undertake strategic projects
Administration Officer p/t (Kent)
- Lead licensing and permitting coordination
- Lead whelk fishery management process
- Provide administrative and clerical support
- Maintain files and record systems
- Assist in admin support for annual plans reports and quarterly meetings
- Administer the financial arrangements of the Authority
IFCO (Scientific and Conservation)* (Kent)
- Lead officer for manila clam trials
- Carry out Habitat Reg's Assessments
- Carry out byelaw impact assessments and support byelaw process
- Carry out consultation replies
- Support research and GIS projects
- Support compliance operations
IFCO (Compliance and Enforcement)* (Kent)
IFCO (Compliance and Enforcement) (Kent)
- Carry out enforcement and survey tasks
- Gather intel to feed into national systems
- Undertake investigations
- Support operation and maintenance of patrol vessels
- Undertake projects * Licence & marine planning
IFCO (Cockle Officer) (Essex)
- Support T24 implementation
- Liaise with the local cockle industry
- Carry out enforcement and survey tasks
- Support national Cockle FMP delivery
- Lead on specific cockle projects

Resources

Offices

KEIFCA currently rents 2 offices; a main office in Ramsgate in Kent and a satellite office in Brightlingsea in Essex. The location of the two offices allows the organisation to efficiently undertake all its duties and helps KEIFCA build and maintain strong links with all its stakeholders either side of the Thames Estuary. The remit of the offices revolves primarily around the spatial distribution of work, with the Brightlingsea office specialising in Essex based issues relating to enforcement, consultations and surveys; the Ramsgate office also undertaking the equivalent tasks on the Kent coast but is in addition the centre for core overarching organisational activities (e.g. administration support, legal support, HR work etc).

Vehicles

KEIFCA owns two Toyota Hilux pickup trucks and two Toyota Corollas, with one truck and one van based at each office. The vehicles are used to transport officers on enforcement duties and key equipment around the district. The Authority also owns four Honda All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV) that are based at Shoeburyness which are used for cockle surveys and other intertidal work.

Boats

KEIFCA has three fishery patrol vessels. The 'Nerissa' is based in Ramsgate and has a crew of four, is a 17m catamaran, and carries a RIB which can be launched from its ramp in various sea conditions to undertake boardings at sea. The RIB carried by Nerissa is a standalone vessel called 'Nereus', which is a 5.4m SeaRider which can take a crew of up to 3 officers to undertake boarding operations either from 'Nerissa' or independently.

'Tamesis' is a 12m catamaran which came into service in 2011 and which was partially EU grant funded. This vessel is based at Brightlingsea and has a crew of three which is supplemented by the Essex shore officer post to make a mustered crew of four, and can undertake enforcement, monitoring and survey duties.

'FPV Vigilant' is a 2020 7.8m Ribcraft RIB which operates completely independently of the larger vessels. Purchased new with EMFF partial funding in January 2020, it is used as a fast response enforcement vessel. Operating with twin outboard engines, it is an improvement in capability and with regards to officer safety compared to the vessel it replaces. Capable of in excess of 40 knots it provides effective coverage of all of the rivers and estuaries within the District and can be transported by road to launch sites close to where it is required.

Appendix 1 - Risk Management Strategy

Introduction

The management of risk is considered in all activities conducted by KEIFCA officers. All employees are familiar with the management of risk through developing risk assessments covering safe working practices through to scrutinising invoices and purchase orders to identify financial risks. Risk assessments are reviewed on an annual basis as a minimum. The risk matrix below is reviewed on a regular basis by the senior management team comprising the Chief IFC Officer (CIFCO), Deputy Chief IFC Officer (DCIFCO) and the Office Manager (OM). The matrix below highlights those risks identified for the financial years 2026/27.

KEIFCA Management and Governance risks

- Failure to meet Kent & Essex IFCA objectives. (CIFCO)
- IFCA decision challenged and overturned in court on the basis that the IFCA has not considered all of the relevant evidence or that one or more Members had a conflict of interest when taking part in making a decision. (CIFCO & Clerk)
- Injury to staff due to unsafe working practices. (CIFCO)
- Failure to maintain effective financial management and control. (CIFCO, Financial Advisor & OM)
- Failure to secure data. (CIFCO & OM)
- Failure of vessel assets. (CIFCO & DCIFCO)
- High turnover of staff. (CIFCO)

KEIFCA Operational risks – Failure to implement IFCA duties

- Failure to effectively monitor and enforce legislation. (CIFCO)
- Enforcement activities conducted in an unprofessional and uncoordinated manner. (CIFCO)
- Failure to maintain survey/sampling programme. (CIFCO)
- Degradation of environmentally sensitive/designated areas due to fishing activity. (CIFCO & DCIFCO)
- Shellfish stocks collapse. (CIFCO)
- Fisheries in the District impacted by the activities of developers/industry. (CIFCO)
- Insufficient time to fully consider environmental impact assessments for inshore developments. (CIFCO)
- Failure to fully engage with stakeholders. (CIFCO)

Description *(owner)*	***Risk*** High 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 Low				***Mitigation***	***Residual Risk***
	Impact	***Likelihood***	***Financial***	***Reputation***		
Failure to meet Kent & Essex IFCA objectives *(CIFCO)*	**4** Change to organisation structure and duties.	**1** KEIFCA officers have worked with the Defra implementation team to set objectives that whilst aspirational are hopefully realistic. Defra have also indicated that the objectives can be reviewed.	**4** New burdens money funded via Defra and the local authorities aims to cover the increased costs from the new IFCA duties. If additional funding is not passed to KEIFCA or funding from LAs is reduced, capacity to meet new duties would be limited. If KEIFCA fails to meet new objectives funding could be reduced.	**4** Potential loss of faith in KEIFCAs governance and organisational structure by Defra and other key organisations	Reflect Kent & Essex IFCA objectives clearly in annual plans and reports Communicate the requirements and duties of KEIFCA to all Authority members and staff Integrate objectives and tasks into staff structure and job descriptions. Make sure IFCA priorities are discussed at staff meetings and staff appraisals Introduce management systems to set up agreed tasks for each member of staff per quarter. Set up systems to monitor staff time spent on each success criteria.	**2** Possibility that although progress will have been made KEIFCA could fail to fully meet all its new objectives.
IFCA decision challenged and over turned in court on the basis that the IFCA has not considered all of the relevant evidence or that one or more Members had a conflict of interest when taking part in making a decision *(CIFCO & Clerk)*	**4** KEIFCA might have to review decision making procedures. KEIFCA might need to review previous decisions.	**1** The Clerk will advise on conflict of interest matters (and the Code of Conduct adopted by the IFCA requires all members to complete a register of interests) KEIFCA staff ensure that the reports to and minutes of IFCA meetings properly record the reasons for decisions.	**4** KEIFCA could face financial loss if such a case was lost	**4** Potential loss of faith in KEIFCA's governance and organisational structure by Defra and other key organisations	All of reports to the IFCA will contain all of the evidence and information needed for the IFCA to make an informed decision The Financial Advisor and Clerk attend all IFCA meetings; Every decision must have a proper audit trail and be in writing, even if it is made and ratified afterwards by the IFCA; Consultation with affected individuals/industries will be carried out and the results of the consultations reported to the IFCA when they make decisions; KEIFCA have adopted procedures in our Standing Orders whereby members of the public and industries not represented on the IFCA can address meetings	**1** Limited potential for such a challenge due to extensive best practice mitigation measures.

Injury to staff due to unsafe working practices (CIFCO)	**4** Death or injury of staff.	**2** Well trained staff. Provision of high standard safety equipment. Well maintained vessels. Well maintained vehicles.	**4** Injury claims, tribunals. HSE/MCA investigations.	**3** Poor morale of staff leading to problems with retention.	Mandatory safety training register maintained. Adequate training budget to cover all training requirements. Well trained staff. Risk assessments available and regularly reviewed for each task. High quality PPE issued to all staff. Safety drills conducted on vessels. Boarding procedure developed and implemented. Lone Working Policy developed and implemented. Conflict Resolution Policy developed and training provided.	**3** Regularly working in hazardous environments. Difficult to mitigate for unforeseen circumstances.
Failure to maintain effective financial management and control. (CIFCO & OM)	**4** Fraudulent activity leading to misuse and/or misappropriation of funds. Unforeseen expenditure, major mechanical failure or loss of large vessel assets. Cybersecurity attacks targeting payments	**2** Limited staff access to financial information and authority to spend money. Vessel reserve funds maintained.	**4** Lack of financial resources to carry out statutory obligations.	**4** The Authority is funded through local taxpayer money, expectation to provide a best value for money service.	External audit of accounts by Audit Commission. Internal Audit conducted by Kent County Council. Restricted use for purchase cards. Kent & Essex IFCA Financial Regulations. Restricted authority to sign cheques. All staff undertake cybersecurity training Annual Plan and Report. Yearly reviews of inventories. Production of detailed accounts. Maintenance of reserve funds.	**1** Very limited potential for large scale fraud or corruption. Small scale misuse of consumable items is still possible. Well maintained vessels.

Failure to secure data. (CIFCO & OM)	**4** Non compliance with Data Protection Act. Prosecution case Cyber security attacks could result in files compromised Loss of data in the event of fire or theft.	**2** Limited staff access to both electronic and paper files. Offices secure and alarmed.	**4** KEIFCA open to both civil and criminal action regarding inability to secure personal information.	**4** Stakeholders no longer believe that confidential information they have supplied is secure. Personnel issues arise over inability to secure data.	All computers are password protected. Individuals only have access to their own computer. Two factor authentication is set up for all staff Secure wireless internet. Access to electronic files is restricted based on an individual's role. Up to date virus software installed on all computers. All staff undertake GDPR and cybersecurity training Important documents secured in safes.	**2** Limited ability for personnel to access files.
Failure of vessel assets (CIFCO & DCIFCO)	**3** Limits enforcement and research capabilities	**2** Authority has three vessels. If one vessel fails, the other vessels can undertake its duties	**3** Hiring of other vessels expensive. Significant mechanical failures time consuming and expensive to rectify.	**2** Significant funding provided to commission vessels. High expectation that the vessels provide value for money.	Highly maintained vessels, with extensive annual refits of vessels. Annual Workboat Code survey. Highly trained staff. Replacement vessel reserves in place Insurance covers cost of initial purchase of vessel + 10% if beyond repair/salvage	**2** Unforeseen events may still cause disruption to activities. .
High turnover of staff (CIFCO)	**3** Reduced efficiency and effectiveness Decrease in morale and increased workload for experienced staff	**2** The clarity over IFCA funding has given staff a better long term view of their role in KEIFCA over the next 4 years.	**3** Financial investment required to recruit, train and provide PPE to new replacement staff.	**2** Authority no longer considered a good employer staff seek alternative employment.	High level of training provided to staff. Induction programme for new recruits. Staff appraisals. Competitive salaries (benchmarking). Provide safe and professional working environment and where possible flexible working arrangements.	**2** Whilst staff leaving is always a possibility, quarterly meetings with each member of staff as well as an increased training budget have been identified as ways of reducing this risk.

Failure to effectively monitor and enforce legislation (CIFCO)	**4** Unregulated fishery. Increased non-compliance with legislation. Reduced Fish Stocks. Impact on Environment.	**2** Monitoring of fishing activity is high but complete coverage is not achievable.	**4** Unregulated fisheries are unsuitable and unprofitable. Illegal landings reduce demand and price.	**4** Authority's performance is judged on its ability to effectively monitor fishing activity and prevent illegal activity from occurring.	Adaptive co-management approach to fisheries improves understanding and compliance with management measures. Warranted Officers regularly monitoring landings and fishing activity throughout the District. Intelligence led / risk based enforcement planning. 16m Patrol vessel & 12m replacement enforcement and fisheries monitoring vessel.	**2** Large district means that full coverage is not possible to achieve. Small minority of fishermen will continue to breach legislation due to short term gain. Limited financial deterrent at present. Some legislation difficult to enforce effectively.
Enforcement activities conducted in an unprofessional and uncoordinated manner (CIFCO)	**4** Inconsistent approach to fisheries enforcement. Enforcement problems and non-compliance with legislation. Poor morale amongst other IFCOs.	**2** Misinformation may be given by IFCOs or information may be misinterpreted by fishermen.	**3** Wrong interpretation of legislation may lead to loss of earnings of fishermen or gain from breaches in legislation going unnoticed.	**4** Failure to carry out enforcement efficiently and effectively reflects poorly on the Authority.	Bi weekly tasking meetings with enforcement officers to report intelligence and direct activities Staff appraisals. All IFOs receive comprehensive in house and external PACE training. Issue of Warrants delayed (normally six months) until Senior Enforcement Officers are convinced the IFCO is capable of carrying out the enforcement role. Code of Conduct for inspections at sea and ashore developed.	**2** Considerable resources are directed towards IFCO enforcement training but frequent changes to legislation and human error may lead to mistakes being made.

Failure to maintain survey/sampling programme (CIFCO)	**4** Lack of accurate data leading to poor management of shellfisheries. Collapse of stocks. Decline in bird numbers. Degradation of wider environment.	**2** Well trained and qualified staff. 12m new patrol/ research vessel.	**4** Closure of fishery due to over exploitation of stock or loss of shellfish water classification. Shellfish fisheries not opened to fishing as insufficient information available to gain consent through Appropriate Assessment procedure.	**4** High expectation that shellfisheries are well managed by Authority. High expectation that additional research work will be completed.	Monitoring and research vessel. Work plans developed for research staff and vessel. Research staff well qualified and experienced with local fisheries. Good communication with fishermen and other relevant organisations. Snr. Conservation/ Research Officer assigned to co-ordinate bio-toxin and bacteriological sampling routines when required. Contingency plans developed.	**2** Planned surveys lost due to poor weather or vessel breakdown. Research programme continue to expand year on year.
Degradation of environmentally sensitive/ designated areas due to fishing activity. (CIFCO & DCIFCO)	**4** Loss of important habitat and species. Conservation Objectives for areas within EMS's not fully met.	**2** Authority's fisheries management takes into consideration environmental issue.	**3** Fisheries directly responsible closed. Increased pressure by conservation groups to stop other fishing activity.	**4** Authority not meeting statutory duties under EU & UK conservation legislation.	Agreed cockle policies. Proposed fishing activity requires Appropriate Assessment. Effective enforcement.	**2** Illegal fishing can damage habitat and stocks.
Shellfish stocks collapse. (CIFCO)	**4** Collapse of fishing industry.	**4** Bivalve stocks have high natural variation. Crustacean stocks not subject to effort control.	**4** Local economy reliant on direct and indirect employment associated with shellfisheries.	**4** Loss in confidence of the Authority's ability to manage fisheries.	Annual stock assessments of bivalve stocks in the Estuary. Fisheries management policies agreed for cockle stocks in the Estuary. Ability to allocate sufficient resources to monitoring of landings and effective enforcement. Consultation with industry on possible management measures.	**2** Stocks will naturally fluctuate. Fisheries impacts may occur outside the control of the Authority, including climate change and over exploitation of stocks outside the district.

Fisheries in the District impacted by the activities of developers / industry. Insufficient time to fully consider environmental impact assessments for inshore developments. (CIFCO)	**2** Shellfish fisheries impacted due to contamination or loss. Temporary or permanent loss of, or damage to, fish stocks, fishery habitats or fishing grounds.	**2** Lack of fishing activity data. Lack of baseline data. Limited understanding of impacts of developments on the marine environment.	**3** Reduced catches and income for fishermen, anglers and other stakeholders. Displacement of fishing effort, reduction in tourism.	**3** Expectation that Authority will represent stakeholders interests even though activities may be occurring outside of the district or not within KEIFCA's control.	Consultations responded to by Science IFCOs with local expertise and seen by CIFCO. Liaison with consenting agencies. Developer meetings attended by KEIFCA representatives. Database has been created holding information on current and historical fishing activities within the Authority's district (Work with MCZ project). Development proposals scrutinized by Defra and Natural England. Consents required for developments.	**2** Increased wind farm development and dredging. High reliance on modelling to determine impact of developments. Limited baseline data.
Failure to fully engage with stakeholders. (CIFCO)	4 Conflict between differing stakeholders Non-compliance with fisheries and environmental legislation.	**3** Difficult to identify and consult with all relevant stakeholders.	**4** Stakeholder requirements are not adequately considered in the management of fisheries.	**4** Lack of trust in the Authority's management processes. Misunderstanding of the Authority's role.	Regular contact with fishermen and Natural England. Dissemination of all survey data and management proposals. Respond to all relevant Government/developer consultations or proposals. Improve website and provide interactive services. Regular/structured liaison with other enforcement bodies. Annual & research reports published. Publication of business plan. Stakeholder feedback questionnaire and analysis.	**2** Further improvement to contact with NGOs and other stakeholders needs to be achieved.

Appendix 2 – Abbreviations

DCIFCO	Assistant Chief Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer
AIFCA	Association of Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities
Cefas	Centre for Environment, Fisheries & Aquaculture Science
CIFCO	Chief Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
EA	Environment Agency
ECC	Essex County Council
EFF	European Fisheries Fund
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIFCA	Eastern Inshore Fishing and Conservation Authority
EMS	European Marine Site
GIS	Geographical Information System
IFCO	Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer
IFCA	Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
KCC	Kent County Council
MC	Medway Council
MCA	Marine Coastguard Agency
MCSS	Monitoring and Control Surveillance System
MCZ	Marine Conservation Zones
MMO	Marine Management Organisation
MoU	Memoranda of Understanding
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MSC	Marine Stewardship Council
MSP	Marine Spatial Plans
NE	Natural England
nm	Nautical Miles
RSA	Recreational Sea Angling
RIB	Rigid Inflatable Boat
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SBC	Southend Borough Council
SFC	Sea Fisheries Committee
SxIFCA	Sussex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SPA	Special Protection Area
TAG	Technical Advisory Group
TBC	Thurrock Borough Council